The first Fuerteventura airfield

In 1940, the Spanish government identified Tefía in Fuerteventura as the optimal location for an airfield. It could not be reached by enemy naval artillery and Western Sahara, where there were Spanish colonial interests, was only about 100 km away.

The construction of an airfield was approved and 20 Spanish soldiers set to work with locals, armed only with pickaxes, shovels and baskets. Every day they loaded about ten trucks with lava rocks to create an airstrip 1.4 km long.

In 1944 it was complete and the first aircraft of the Spanish Air Force landed at Tefía airfield, the first flight connection between continental Europe and Fuerteventura. A military aircraft flew regularly to the island thereafter. In 1946, the civil state airline Iberia acquired the license to fly to the airport and flew from Tefía to Gran Canaria and Tenerife. The initial wooden barracks were later replaced by a terminal building which has been restored as a youth hostel and astronomical observatory.

However there were problems from the start. The airport could only be reached from Puerto del Rosario via a rough track and there were no bus connections on the island. The hills surrounding the airfield produced strong winds and turbulence, and the inclination of the airfield across the landing direction posed massive problems for the aircraft of the time. As a result there were countless accidents.

It was eventually recognised that the Tefia airfield was unsuitable, and a new airport was constructed at Los Estancos in 1950. The last flight from Tefia took place in 1952. Even the new site was less than optimal, however, as the runway was crossed by a track which had to be closed for every take-off and landing. The terminal building for this airport is also still in existence near the technology park.

Los Estancos was replaced by the present airport, which opened in 1969, and the first international flight landed there in 1973 from Dusseldorf. In 1982 there were still no jetways or

baggage handling facilities, and bags were delivered by truck to a low wall outside the terminal building.